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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - SAUDI ELECTIONS
PARIS - MONDAY, APRIL 25, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

SAUDI ELECTIONS

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

THE EUROPEAN CONSTITUTION AND THE THREAT OF CHINESE TEXTILE EXPORTS ARE TWO OF TODAY'S MAJOR STORIES, BROUGHT TOGETHER IN A QUOTE IN LES ECHOS FROM PM RAFFARIN ON THE LAST DAY OF HIS VISIT TO CHINA: "ONLY A 'YES' TO THE CONSTITUTION WILL HELP EUROPE TO HOLD ITS RANK IN A GLOBAL ECONOMY. CHINA'S 'YES' TO OPENING ITSELF TO THE REST OF THE WORLD CALLS FOR EUROPE'S 'YES' TO INCREASED EUROPEAN BUILDING. A 'NO' WOULD LEAD TO A STALLED EUROPE, WHILE A 'YES' WOULD POSITION EUROPE AS A GLOBAL PLAYER ALONG WITH THE U.S. AND A DEVELOPING CHINA." IN REGIONAL LES DERNIERES NOUVELLES D'ALSACE, EDITORIALIST JEAN-CLAUDE KIEFER PINS DOWN THE CHOICES: "LAST WEEK A REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE CHINESE TRADE MINISTRY SAID IN BRUSSELS: 'TO BUY ONE AIRBUS A320 WE NEED TO SELL TWENTY MILLION SHIRTS.' THIS IS A PERFECT ILLUSTRATION OF THE DILEMMA EUROPE IS FACING. BUT THE DECISION HAS IN A SENSE ALREADY BEEN MADE IN BRUSSELS; BY LEAVING IT UP TO BEIJING'S GOODWILL, THE CHOICE TO SELL AIRBUSES AND MAYBE EVEN WEAPONS TO CHINA HAS ALREADY BEEN MADE, EVEN IF IT MEANS LAYING OFF MINIMUM WAGE WORKERS."

SEVERAL MINISTERS AND FORMER POLITICIANS ARE INTERVIEWED IN TODAY'S PRESS AS THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE 'YES' TO THE EUROPEAN CONSTITUTION BEGINS TO TAKE MOMENTUM. FRANCE SOIR INTERVIEWS FORMER PRESIDENT VALERY GISCARD D'ESTAING: "THE TEST FLIGHT OF THE A380 WILL BE A DEMONSTRATION OF WHAT EUROPE CAN DO. WITH REGARD TO TURKEY, I AM MYSELF OPPOSED TO ITS EU MEMBERSHIP. WE CAN ALWAYS SAY NO TO TURKEY. BY ADOPTING THE EU CONSTITUTION WE WILL HAVE AN ALTERNATIVE: ARTICLE 57 OF THE CONSTITUTION ALLOWS FOR NEGOTIATIONS WITH EUROPE'S NEIGHBORS ON AGREEMENTS OF 'PRIVILEGED PARTNERSHIP.' THE AMERICANS ARE IN A PHASE WHERE THEY WANT TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH THE EUROPEANS, WHICH DETERIORATED DURING THE WAR IN IRAQ. THEY SAID THERE WERE GOOD AND BAD EUROPEANS. TO ERASE THIS THEY ARE NOW SAYING THEY ARE HAPPY THAT EUROPEANS ARE UNITING. BUT THEY ARE NOT TAKING A POSITION ON THE ISSUE."

LE FIGARO INTERVIEWS FORMER PM RAYMOND BARRE, WHO LIKE GISCARD D'ESTAING, URGES THE FRENCH NOT TO LET TURKEY'S MEMBERSHIP COLOR THEIR VOTE: "THERE IS OVER THIS SUBJECT AN IRRATIONAL FRENZY." AND WARNS: "IN CASE OF A VICTORY OF THE 'NO,' THE EUROPEAN UNION WOULD OF COURSE SURVIVE, BUT ITS PROGRESS WOULD BE SLOWED. FRANCE'S CREDIBILITY WOULD GREATLY SUFFER. THE U.S. WOULD NOT REGRET THE 'NO' AND GREAT BRITAIN WOULD MORE EASILY BE ABLE TO PLAY ITS OWN ROLE WITHIN EUROPE."

LE PARISIEN INTERVIEWS MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR DOMINIQUE DE VILLEPIN WHO CALLS ON THE FRENCH "NOT TO MISS AN IMPORTANT DATE" AND TO BE CAREFUL "NOT TO CONFUSE THE ISSUES."

LE FIGARO ALSO INTERVIEWS BILL KRISTOL OF THE WEEKLY STANDARD: "THE U.S. WANTS A POLITICALLY AND ECONOMICALLY STRONG EUROPE. PERSONALLY, I WOULD PREFER IT IF THAT EUROPE WERE NOT ANTI-AMERICAN. FOR FRANCE TO EXPRESS A DISAGREEMENT WITH THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION ON A VARIETY OF ISSUES, LIKE IRAQ, IS NOT IN ITSELF DISTURBING. WHAT DISTURBS ME IS THAT SOME REJOICED WHEN WE EXPERIENCED MILITARY DIFFICULTIES AFTER THE INTERVENTION. IT WOULD BE NICE IF CERTAIN MEMBERS OF FRANCE AND EUROPE'S GOVERNING ELITE DID NOT SYSTEMATICALLY GIVE THE IMPRESSION OF ABSOLVING DICTATORS."

ALL OUTLETS REPORT ON ZACCHARIAS MOUSSAOUI'S DECISION TO PLEAD GUILTY AND THE RISK HE IS TAKING. FOR PHILIPPE GELIE IN LE FIGARO, "IT IS THE RISKIEST WAGER HE COULD HAVE TAKEN. NEVER IN THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN JUSTICE HAS AN ACCUSED PUNISHABLE WITH THE DEATH PENALTY EVER PLEADED GUILTY WITHOUT PLEA BARGAINING."

SAUDI ARABIA'S MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS AND THE ISLAMIC VICTORY ARE ANALYZED IN LIBERATION AND LE FIGARO. (SEE PART C)

POPE BENEDICT XVI'S INAUGURAL SUNDAY MASS IS WIDELY REPORTED. IN LE FIGARO A REPORT NOTES: "CONTRARY TO POPE JOHN PAUL II'S

FUNERAL, THE U.S. WAS NOT WIDELY REPRESENTED AT POPE BENEDICT XVI'S INAUGURAL MASS. NO PRESIDENTS BUSH OR CLINTON, BUT INSTEAD GOVERNOR JEB BUSH OF FLORIDA, WHO CONVERTED TO CATHOLICISM AND IS ALLEGEDLY A MEMBER OF THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS. WHICH IS ONE OF THE VATICAN'S MAJOR SOURCE OF FINANCING."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

SAUDI ELECTIONS

"BUSH CONCERNED OVER SAUDI WEAKNESSES"
PHILIPPE GELIE IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (04/25): "CROWN PRINCE ABDALLAH WILL BE VISITING PRESIDENT BUSH'S CRAWFORD RANCH TODAY. WHERE THE RISING PRICE OF OIL WILL BE DISCUSSED. PRESIDENT BUSH WILL CERTAINLY REMIND HIM OF THE SAUDI 'PROMISE' TO INCREASE OIL PRODUCTION. BUT SUCH A COMPLICATED AND IMPORTANT PARTNER AS SAUDI ARABIA MUST BE DEALT WITH CAREFULLY. PRESIDENT BUSH WILL BE SURE TO ENCOURAGE SAUDI ARABIA'S SHY PROCESS TOWARDS REFORM. WHILE THE RECENT MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS CANNOT BE USED AS AN EXAMPLE, THE WHITE HOUSE WILL INSIST ON THE RIGHT FOR EACH TO MOVE 'AT ITS OWN RHYTHM.' WHAT WORRIES THE U.S. THE MOST IS THE REGIME'S SUPPOSED INSTABILITY AND ITS CONTINUED FINANCING OF RADICAL ISLAM. THE PREDOMINANT FEELING IN WASHINGTON IS THAT THE SAUDI MONARCHY'S DAYS ARE COUNTED. JAMES BAKER GAVE IT FIVE YEARS, BUT THAT WAS TWO AND HALF YEARS AGO. FACED WITH THE RISK OF THE FALL OF THE SAUDI REGIME. THE WHITE HOUSE CONTINUES TO SALUTE ANTI-TERRORIST COOPERATION WITH THE SAUDIS, WHILE THE U.S. NAVY AND AMERICAN COAST GUARDS CONTINUE TO PATROL GULF WATERS TO PROTECT MAJOR OIL SITES." WOLFF